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1949's. American actions in Vietnam, however well intentioned, do not square with the image of America that the world has traditionally admired.

In November of 1965, I visited a civilian casualty hospital in Danang near the site of one of our largest airbases in Vietnam. The poorly equipped wards were jammed with terribly burned, broken and torn men, women and children, innocent victims of our bombs, napalm and artillery. They lay silently—two persons on each cot—their pained eyes following me as I walked from bed to bed. I wondered that day, as I do now, if this great Nation of ours has the right to make so costly a decision on behalf of another people who have already suffered so grievously.

Ninth. Our course in Vietnam does not square with the conscience of the judgment of many thoughtful Americans. But as the tempo of the battle increases and the martial spirit rises, the dissenter will need to draw deeply on his courage. Our official spokesmen have demonstrated a growing resentment toward the doubter and the dissenter. The impression is being created that while freedom of conscience and expression are desirable theoretical principles, they are too dangerous to practice in wartime. Even when the claims of top level officials prove to be groundless or contradictory, the pressure is on to accept the next pronouncement without question. To challenge the soundness of our policy judgments is more and more being equated with "letting down the boys in Vietnam" or giving aid to Hanoi. It is almost as though we are fighting so intently to secure freedom in Vietnam that we are willing to sacrifice it in America. It is still a regrettable truism that truth is the first casualty in wartime. Yet, it is in times of national crisis and conflict that America most urgently needs men who will speak out with maximum candor.

For my own part, I reject the assumptions that lie behind our involvement, and I regret each new step toward a deeper involvement. Before we take those fateful additional steps that may lead to Armageddon, I recommend now as I have in the past, but with a new urgency and new concern, that we:

First, stop the bombing, north and south, and search and destroy offensive sweeps, and confine our military action to holding operations on the ground. Bombing the north has failed to halt or seriously check the flow of troops to the south and may, in fact, have prompted a much greater war effort by Hanoi. Secretary McNamara himself told a Senate committee:

I don't believe that the bombing . . . has significantly reduced (nor would reduce) the actual flow of men and material to the South.

In the south, our bombs have killed or maimed countless numbers of innocent people and alienated others whose support we covet. A defensive holding action in the south as advocated by Generals Gavin and Ridgway could be pursued while determined efforts are being made to negotiate a ceasefire. It is the bombing of North Vietnam that presents the greatest obstacle to a settlement and

greatest danger of involving Russia or China in the war.

We should clearly state our willingness to negotiate directly with the Vietcong with some recognition that they will play a significant role in any provisional government resulting from a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement.

We should use what influence we have to encourage a more broadly based civilian government in Saigon—a government willing to start discussions with the other side looking toward arrangements to end the war.

We should advocate an international presence to police a ceasefire, supervise elections, provide an umbrella for the resettlement of Vietnamese concerned about their safety, and arrange for the withdrawal of all outside forces and the conversion of military bases to peace-time uses.

The path to sanity and peace in southeast Asia will not be easy. The ways to a larger war is enticing and simple. But before we make that choice, let us recall the words of Virgil:

Easy is the descent to Hell; night and day the gates stand open; but to reclimb the slope and escape to the outer air, this indeed is a task.

But if we can accomplish that task, we should use the Vietnam experience as a guide to future policy. The enormous destruction of life and property in Vietnam, both American and Vietnamese, will have served no useful purpose unless we learn well the lessons that this tragic conflict can teach us. Those lessons, I believe, include the following:

First, conflicts of this kind have historical dimensions which are essentially political, economic, and psychological; they do not respond readily to military force from the outside. Surely, the military might of the United States can subdue little Vietnam, south and north.

But is this what the struggle is all about? I think not. We are confronted in Vietnam with an indigenous guerrilla force that has enjoyed the sympathy or the complicity of much of the local peasantry. The ineffective and unpopular remedies of Saigon have not earned the confidence of their subjects. Urgent priorities, of which land reform is probably the most important, have been ignored. Thus, the destruction of the military power of the guerrillas and of North Vietnam leaves fundamental political and economic problems still festering to set the stage for future conflict or continued tyranny and injustice.

Second, in the future the United States should avoid committing its power to internal struggles of this kind. The factors involved are so complex and confusing that it is beyond the capacity of an outside nation to know which group deserves support and which opposition. In spite of the administration's strenuous efforts to picture the situation as a war of aggression from the north, it is essentially a civil conflict among various groups of Vietnamese. The Vietcong control is strongest in the delta country of the south a thousand miles from North Vietnam and that control is exercised by indigenous forces who enjoy the cooperation of the local peasantry.

Such internal disputes should be fought out by the competing groups without outside interference, or be referred to the United Nations. We have no obligation to play policeman for the world and especially in Asia, which is so sensitive to heavy-handed interference by even well-meaning white men.

Third, unpopular, corrupt regimes of the kind we have been allied with in Saigon do not deserve to be saved by the blood of American boys. Local governments that have done a good job usually have the confidence of the local citizens. They ordinarily do not have a guerrilla problem and when they do, their own people are loyal enough to the Government to take care of the guerrillas instead of depending on us to do that for them.

Even if one assumes that we are faced with a battle for power between Ho Chi Minh of the north and Marshal Ky of the south, there is no clear issue here of black and white or tyranny and freedom. Ho is a Communist tyrant, but does Marshal Ky with his admiration for Adolf Hitler represents the kind of ideals and morality that American men should die for?

I have never regretted my service as a bomber pilot in World War II when we stopped the madmen Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo. But I do not believe that Vietnam is that kind of testing ground of freedom and free world security. It is a confusing civil conflict with no real certainty as to the issues at stake. I do not want to see my son or other boys die in that kind of doubtful struggle.

Fourth, those who believe that American military power has an important role to play in the Pacific should return to the once-accepted doctrine of our best generals that we should avoid committing American soldiers to the jungles of Asia. Our power in the Pacific is in naval and air strength as a deterrent against aggression. Local governments must deal with their own guerrilla problems.

Fifth, Congress must never again surrender its power under our constitutional system by permitting an ill-advised, undeclared war of this kind. Our involvement in South Vietnam came about through a series of moves by the executive branch—each one seemingly restrained and yet each one setting the stage for a deeper commitment. The complex of administration moves involving the State Department, the CIA, the Pentagon, AID, and various private interests—all of these have played a greater role than has Congress. Congress cannot be very proud of its function in the dreary history of this steadily widening war. That function has been very largely one of acquiescence in little-understood administration efforts. The surveillance, the debate, and the dissent since 1965, while courageous and admirable, came too late in the day to head off the unwise course charted by our policymakers.

For the future, Members of Congress and the administration will do well to heed the admonition of Edmund Burke, a distinguished legislator of an earlier day: